High School Transition Policy
Frequently Asked Questions

FAQs added 12-19-08

How is the role of the school counselor affected in planning for implementation of the new policy for the freshman class of 2009-2010?

Six year plans have been required by State Board of Education policy for some time. This is not a new initiative. The difference is now we are asking schools and school counselors to be accountable for working with students and parents not only on creating a six year plan but also using it as an advising tool throughout high school. The six year plan is to be created in the spring of the 8th grade year. It outlines the courses students plan to take in their 4 years of high school plus their potential plans 2 years after high school. There is flexibility with these plans (if schools use them appropriately). The plans should be reviewed each year by the school counselor or teacher advisor, parent and student. Changes may be made at any time.

Does the new graduation policy allow a student to graduate in less than 4 years? If so, how does that affect the math requirement?

Yes, students may graduate early. The policy requires students to take a math course each year while in high school. The purpose is to be and stay ready mathematically for college and not to skip a year. The policy also requires four units of math to be completed (i.e. Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II (or their equivalent) and an additional advanced math credit. This means a student will take one math course each year. However, a student may accelerate and graduate early as long as they complete the 4 credits of math and take math each year that they are enrolled in high school.

Previous FAQs

What is an Elective Focus/Program of Study?

These are interchangeable terms that relate the concept of a student completing at least three units in a related academic or CTE area. The State Board of Education's "High School Policy" requires that all students, beginning with the 9th grade class of 2009-2010, complete an approved academic elective focus or a CTE program of study.

What are the approved areas of elective focus?

The elective focus may be CTE, science and math, humanities, fine arts, AP/IB, or other areas approved by the local board of education. Students completing a CTE elective focus must complete three units in the same CTE program area. To complete an approved focus in Trade and Industrial (T & I), three courses must be in one of the following:

Transportation
Manufacturing
Construction
Criminal Justice
Cosmetology
Culinary Arts
Communication
Arts

In regard to Programs of Study (POS), if a student in a POS such as marketing uses a marketing course to substitute as an economics credit; does the student take 2 or 3 more marketing courses to complete the marketing elective focus?

Students must take three elective classes in the POS whether they substitute or not, so in the above scenario, they would take two more in addition to the marketing course substituting for economics. Students would receive one credit in marketing and satisfy the requirement for .5 credit in economics.

For an academic elective focus, what are the requirements?

For math and science, three additional math and/or science courses (electives) are required in addition to the four math and three science required courses. For a humanities focus, any combination of courses in English, Language Arts, Foreign Language and Social Studies above the core requirements will satisfy the humanities focus area. Fine arts and AP/IB foci require any three courses above the core requirements.

Can high school courses taken in the middle school count toward an elective focus?

Courses taken in middle school may count toward the required core courses. Algebra I, for example, taken in eighth grade, would count toward the core requirement; the core plus three additional courses in math and/or science could complete the elective focus. Remember, a student will still be required to take at least one math course each year regardless of how many credits a student earns in middle schools.

Does foreign language taken in 8th grade count as a core credit or an elective focus credit?

It would count as a required credit. An elective focus is three credits PLUS the core requirements. In this case, 2 foreign language credits plus 3 additional credits would complete the focused program of study in humanities.

Are all students required to meet the foreign language requirement?

In exceptional circumstances, schools may waive the foreign language requirement for students who are not planning to attend a university to expand and enhance their elective focus. In this case, students could take an additional three credits to enhance or add a program of study.

What about four credits of JROTC? Would that count as an elective focus?

JROTC is not a state recognized elective focus area, but a local education agency is permitted to approve this, or any other, set of related courses to meet the requirement.

If a student earns 4 JROTC credits, are they able to waive personal finance, US Government, Lifetime Wellness and Physical education?

Yes, if the local education agency allows the substitution. Remember, in order for JROTC to satisfy the US government requirement, the instructor must also meet the highly qualified requirements for teaching government.

Will JROTC substitute for Lifetime Wellness and PE or just Lifetime Wellness?

Yes, two years of JROTC may substitute for Lifetime Wellness requirement and one additional year may substitute for PE requirement.

With regard to contextual academic courses (Technical Algebra, Technical Geometry, Communications for Life, and Principles of Technology I/II), are these courses acceptable by all of the following: TBR, UT system, and NCAA?

TBR and UT publish a list of courses approved for credit. NCAA requirements must be determined on a case by case basis. Communication for Life will be listed as English IV beginning in 2009-10 course codes document.

When using courses to substitute for required courses such as technical geometry, technical algebra, principles of technology I/II, economics, personal finance, lifetime wellness, PE, etc; how should these substitutions be adequately reflected on the transcript?

See above. Note that most of the contextual academic course titles will be changed in the 2009-10 course codes document to reflect its academic counterpart. The transcript may simply reflect the course that substitutes and not the course it substitutes for.

Can the additional ½ credit in physical education be met by marching band?

Yes. The physical education requirement may be met by substituting a documented and equivalent time of physical activity in other areas including marching band, JROTC, cheerleading, interscholastic athletics, and school sponsored intramural athletics, or other areas (such as dance) approved by the local board of education.

How should a substitution for the .5 PE (such as band participation, sports, cheerleading) be reflected on the transcript?

The system may choose how they reflect the participation on the transcript, with notation that it substitutes for the half credit in PE.

What are the criteria for graduating with distinction?

Students will be recognized as graduating with "distinction" by attaining a B average and completing at least one of the following:

- earn a nationally recognized industry certification
- participate in at least one of the Governor's Schools
- participate in one of the state's All State musical organizations
- be selected as a National Merit Finalist or Semi-Finalist
- attain a score of 31 or higher composite score on the ACT
- attain a score of 3 or higher on at least two advanced placement exams
- successfully complete the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme
- earn 12 or more semester hours of transcripted postsecondary credit

Each local school board shall develop a policy prescribing how students graduating with "distinction" will be noted and recognized.

What are the science graduation requirements for the freshman class of 2009-2010?

The freshman class of 2009-2010 will be required to have three credits in science. One of these courses must be Biology, one must be Chemistry or Physics, and one additional lab science course. End of course tests will be given in these three courses. See the TBR and UT System school list of approved lab science courses**.**

Does Conceptual Physics qualify as a science graduation requirement?

Yes. Conceptual Physics is a laboratory science course that fulfills the new graduation requirements for the freshmen class of 2009-2010.

How does Conceptual Physics differ from a traditional Physics course?

As the name suggests, conceptual physics deals with topics and phenomena that relate directly to a students' world. Physics concepts are the easiest to observe through experiments. Because of this, physics experiences facilitate predictions and inquiry based learning.

Algebra is taught concurrently with conceptual physics to provide the necessary mathematical foundation for understanding key physics topics. Conceptual Physics gives students the opportunity to apply their mathematical skills in real world situations.

What areas of endorsement does the State require for someone who would be teaching conceptual physics?

Currently the endorsements assigned for teaching this course are Chemistry or Physics. Accommodations for additional endorsements are currently in the discussion stage, and may be available through professional development opportunities.

What endorsement is needed to teach Principles of Technology I and II?

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A teacher must be endorsed in Chemistry or Physics to teach Principles of Technology I.
Teachers who teach this course must hold proper endorsement and have attended the state-approved, five-day training. This course may satisfy a laboratory science credits required for graduation

A teacher must be endorsed in Chemistry or Physics to teach Principles of Technology II.
Teachers who teach this course must hold proper endorsement and have attended the Principles of Technology I state-approved, five-day training. This course satisfies one science credit required for graduation. The completion of Principles of Technology I and II is equivalent to Physics.

What mathematics courses are required for graduation?

The new policy requires students to take a mathematics course each year while in high school to complete a 4 credit core that must include Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II (or the equivalent of these courses) and one advanced math course. **Students must be enrolled in a mathematics course each school year**. The Bridge Math course is designed for students who have not scored 19 or higher on the ACT by the beginning of the senior year and is in the development stage.

See the TBR and UT list of courses to identify accepted math courses.

Can regular education students take an Algebra IA and Algebra IB course of study?

Yes, however, the A course earns elective credit only. The mathematics credit is awarded with the B course. Students must complete both the A and B course within the same calendar year. Further, the A course will not count as part of a student's elective focus. For guidance regarding students with disabilities, refer to the section at the end of this document.

Note. Course codes will be developed for the A and B options. Systems will no longer be required to complete a special course application for A and B courses beginning with the 2009-2010 school year.

What math course should students take after completing Algebra II?

Currently, many students have access to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics) focused courses such as Pre-Calculus, Calculus, Discrete Mathematics, Statistics, Advanced Algebra & Trig. or an Advanced Placement course. These options will still be available to any student who wishes to take them according to local school board policy. The state is developing options for students who do not wish to take a traditional STEM course.

Under the new high school policy when should students take Algebra I?

Local school systems can choose to offer an Algebra I course prior to high school and award high school credit; however, students will still be expected to complete a four year course of study while in high school. The standard course of study for the middle grades will prepare all students for a comprehensive Algebra I course in the 9th grade.

What is an enrichment level math course?

There is no terminology for "enrichment" math courses in the high school policy. However, Foundations Math I & II will continue to be offered as elective math credit courses only. The Foundations Math courses may be used concurrently with an algebra level course during the ninth grade. The Technical Mathematics course (equivalent to a Foundations course) will no longer be offered.

Must Algebra I and/or Geometry be taken in high school or can a student accelerate to take 4 years of higher math and still fulfill math core requirements?

The student may take courses for credit prior to high school, but still must complete one math course each of their four years in high school. Students may only "accelerate" in anticipation of taking very rigorous courses during the junior and senior year, not to complete math requirements early. This type of acceleration may allow student to create a more robust elective focus.

Can students earn 2 credits in math in one year? (Geometry/Algebra II in same year)? What if a student earns 4 math credits in 3 years (non-middle school), do they need to take an additional year of math their senior year?

Students may earn multiple math credits in one year, but they must still complete a math course each year they are enrolled. These students will graduate with a number of credits well above the minimums required for graduation.

What will SWD have to do to qualify for a regular diploma?

Students with disabilities must complete the 22 credits required with certain documented exceptions.

What are the additional exit options for SWD?

A Transition Certificate may be awarded to SWD who, at the end of the 4th year of high school, have failed to earn a regular diploma (22 units of credit) but have satisfactorily completed an IEP, and have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct.

SWD may continue to work towards the high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two years old.

An IEP certificate will be awarded to SWD who have (1) satisfactorily completed an IEP, (2) successfully completed a portfolio, and (3) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct. This replaces the old "Special Education Diploma"

When will the modified tests for SWD be in place for grades 3-8?

The Modified Academic Achievement Standards assessment (MAAS) will be field tested in Spring 2009 and be operational in Spring 2010.

What modifications will be made to the graduation requirements for students with disabilities?

Students with qualifying disabilities in math as documented in the IEP shall be required to achieve at least Algebra I and Geometry (or equivalent). The required number of credits in math will be achieved through increased instructional time, appropriate methodologies, accommodations and other differentiated instruction as determined by the IEP team. These students may earn mathematics credit for Algebra IA and for Algebra IB as well as math credit for Geometry A and Geometry B.

Students with qualifying disabilities in reading/and or math as documented in the IEP are required to achieve at least Biology I and two other lab science credits. The required number of credits in science will be achieved though increased instructional time, appropriate methodologies, and accommodations and other differentiated instruction, as determined by the IEP team. Note: Only one additional lab course is needed if Biology IA and B are taken for credit.

Students failing to earn a yearly grade of 70 or higher in a course that has an end-of-course test and whose disability adversely effects performance in that test will be allowed, through an approved process, to add to their end-of course assessment by demonstrating the state identified core knowledge and skills contained within that course through an alternative performance-based assessment. These assessments will be in place by the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year.